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ABSTRACT

Criteria for self-study by private college governing boards are presented. For each criterion, questions are presented, along with three response options: "yes," "no," and "do not know or can not judge." A response option for judging the board's overall performance on each criterion is also included. In addition, brief introductory comments for each criterion are presented. The criteria are as follows: institutional mission and educational policy, institutional planning, physical plant, financial support and management, board membership, board organization, board/chief executive relations, board/faculty relations, board/student relations, and court of appeal. A checklist designed to help board members assess the extent to which they have absorbed their roles and institutions is also presented, which covers the trustee's background and traits, knowlege of the institution, board and committee meetings, fund-raising and public relations, and other concerns. Finally, the following considerations are addressed by open-ended questions: issues that have most occupied the board's time and attention during the past year; one or two successes of the board; and shortcomings of the board's organization or performance. (SW)

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self-study criteria

for governing boards of independent colleges and universities

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The materials contained here were developed by Dr. James Gilbert Paltridge, Research Educator, with the assistance of Mrs. Frances La Vonne White, Research Assistant, Center for Research and Development in Higher Education, and the collaboration of Dr. Richard T. Ingram, Executive Vice President of the Association of Governing Boards.

A national Advisory Committee of ten chief executives and ten members of various types of postsecondary education boards, contributed significantly to this project. AGB and the authors express their appreciation to the Committee, as well as to the trustees of several institutional boards who participated in field-testing of early versions of the criteria.

Any viewpoints implied or expressed about the performance standards of higher education boards are the sole responsibility of the authors, and not those of the project's Advisory Committee, The Ford Foundation, the Association of Governing Boards, or the Center for Research and Development in Higher Education, University of California, Berkeley.

The Association will welcome reports from institutions using these materials and suggestions for improving both the criteria and the suggested procedures.

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Suggestion to Users: This form can be adapted to meet the distinctive characteristics of your board and institution. Responses which require qualification or clarification can be explained in the "comment" section for each criterion. (A separate User's Guide for implementing a self-study is also available from AGB.)

Self-Study Criteria for Governing Boards of Independent Colleges and Universities was developed with the assistance of a grant from The Ford Foundation.

Criterion 1

Institutional Mission and Educational Policy

No institution can be all things to all people. Each institution must decide what its particular mission is—its *real purpose*—if it is to have sound direction. The mission must be clearly defined so students will know the institution's purposes and objectives, faculty members will know how to direct their efforts, and the several publics on whom the campus community depends will know what they are supporting.

An official statement setting forth the specific mission of a college or university should be a cooperative effort of the administration, the faculty, and the governing board. Acting alone, the board lacks the professional experience to define educational goals in detail. Its role is to insure that the mission is clearly stated. Because it stands apart from day-to-day operations, administrative preoccupations, and faculty special interests, the board is in a unique position to lead, seek consensus, and stimulate action.

	Yes	No	Don't Know or Can't Judge
1. Is there a written and officially adopted statement of the institution's mission or purpose?	_____	_____	_____
2. In your opinion is this statement sufficiently clear and useful to serve as a guide to the board, administration, and faculty?	_____	_____	_____
3. Does the board periodically review its statement of purpose and educational goals, and examine the policies which implement them?	_____	_____	_____
4. Does the board assume a role in helping to determine whether educational programs are viable and consistent with the institution's mission?	_____	_____	_____
5. Do you feel that the institution lives up to its stated mission?	_____	_____	_____

Summary: In relation to this criterion I feel that the board's overall performance has been:

Very Good_____ Good_____ Barely Adequate_____ Poor_____

Don't Know or Cannot Judge_____

Further comments or suggestions related to this criterion:

Criterion 2

Institutional Planning

In the difficult period stretching ahead for higher education, effective planning is increasingly essential. The number and future sources of students should be anticipated. Projections of expenses and income need to be studied. The character of the educational program and student services must be considered. The size of the faculty and its distribution by rank and tenured status are matters to be plotted carefully.

The board should be involved in the planning process, and adopted plans should be used by it as a guide to decision making.

	Yes	No	Don't Know or Can't Judge
1. Does the board require, participate in, review, and/or approve comprehensive institutional planning regarding:			
a. enrollments?	_____	_____	_____
b. staffing?	_____	_____	_____
c. physical facilities?	_____	_____	_____
d. availability of resources?	_____	_____	_____
e. educational programs?	_____	_____	_____
2. Has the board approved a comprehensive institutional plan within the past five years?	_____	_____	_____
3. Does the board have a schedule for reviewing and, if desirable, revising the plan at regular intervals?	_____	_____	_____
4. Was the faculty involved in the plan's development?	_____	_____	_____

Summary: In relation to this criterion I feel the board's overall performance has been:

Very Good_____ Good_____ Barely Adequate_____ Poor_____

Don't Know or Cannot Judge_____

Further comments or suggestions related to this criterion:

Criterion 3

Physical Plant

It is the board's responsibility to create and maintain a physical environment that is conducive to learning and consistent with reasonable expectations of future funds and enrollment trends. Decisions that involve the campus master plan and the capital outlay budget request are the major concerns. Prudence demands that maximum use be made of the present physical plant before construction or remodeling is considered. And maintenance should not be deferred to the possible peril of the institution's future. Efficient use of the board's time and effort requires that it be concerned only with those matters that cannot properly be delegated to the staff.

	Yes	No	Don't Know or Can't Judge
1. Has the board approved a master plan for the physical campus which includes both present and anticipated needs?	_____	_____	_____
2. Within the past two years, has the board received and reviewed a report on physical plant utilization—classroom, laboratory, dormitory, office, and other building space?	_____	_____	_____
3. Prior to its consideration of requests for remodeling or new construction, has the board satisfied itself that present spaces are being used effectively and instructional areas are scheduled for optimum utilization?	_____	_____	_____
4. Is the board satisfied that maintenance programs are adequate and that they are not being deferred unreasonably?	_____	_____	_____
5. Do you feel that the board makes decisions on details relating to buildings and grounds that really should be delegated to the administrative staff?	_____	_____	_____

Summary: In relation to this criterion I feel that the board's overall performance has been:

Very Good_____ Good_____ Barely Adequate_____ Poor_____

Don't Know or Cannot Judge_____

Further comments or suggestions related to this criterion:

Criterion 4

Financial Support and Management

In the financial affairs of the institution the board has a dual responsibility. It must secure the financial resources sufficient to meet operating costs and maintain the institution in a manner consistent with its stated mission and goals. It must be sure that the institution has prudent fiscal management. The collective effort of all board members is essential to the first responsibility. The second responsibility calls upon the expertise of those board members who are experienced in devising financial policies, managing investments, or have other financial skills. The board must see to it that sound financial policies are followed, yet refrain from personal involvement in the execution of policies and administration of financial programs.

	Yes	No	Don't Know or Can't Judge
1. Do you feel that the *resource development* program is well organized into a continuing and coordinated effort of the board and the president?	_____	_____	_____
2. Do you feel there is an adequate financial commitment on the part of individual board members to:			
a. personal giving?	_____	_____	_____
b. influencing other persons or organizations to give?	_____	_____	_____
3. Does the board have within its membership persons with special expertise who give their advice and leadership in the following areas:			
a. long-range fiscal planning?	_____	_____	_____
b. investment practices?	_____	_____	_____
c. fiscal management?	_____	_____	_____
d. budget review?	_____	_____	_____
e. analyses of reports and recommendations of the auditor?	_____	_____	_____
4. Does the board understand "fund accounting" and the data presented in regular financial reports?	_____	_____	_____
5. Do you feel that the board accepts fully its responsibility for prudent fiscal management?	_____	_____	_____

Summary: In relation to this criterion I feel that the board's overall performance has been:

Very Good_____ Good_____ Barely Adequate_____ Poor_____

Don't Know or Cannot Judge_____

Further comments or suggestions related to this criterion:

Criterion 5

Board Membership

A primary requisite for effective governance is to be sure that the men and women responsible for the institution's policy direction have the skills, knowledge, and background necessary for effective decision making. The complex operation of modern educational institutions requires that boards have available to them a wide range of experiences and expertise. The larger society to which these institutions are now linked more closely than ever before requires that the board's membership be more diverse in terms of geographic, social, or occupational origins, and viewpoints. Such diversity does not require that members be representatives of special groups or interests unless this is specified in the bylaws or charter. Each member must be willing to serve the interests of the institution as a whole.

	Yes	No	Don't Know or Can't Judge
1. Do you feel that the board now contains a sufficient range of expertise, attitudes, and external relationships to make it an effective board?	_____	_____	_____
2. Does the board have a committee that assesses its needs in the way of qualifications of new members, and that maintains a roster of prospective members?	_____	_____	_____
3. Does the board have a committee that reviews the performance of its individual members?	_____	_____	_____
4. Does the board have an established procedure for orienting new members to their institution and to their duties and responsibilities?	_____	_____	_____
5. Do you feel that the board should alter its policies and practices with respect to:			
a. size?	_____	_____	_____
b. length of term?	_____	_____	_____
c. number of successive terms?	_____	_____	_____
d. age limit or honorary retirement?	_____	_____	_____
e. age composition?	_____	_____	_____
f. sex composition?	_____	_____	_____
g. minority composition?	_____	_____	_____
h. geographical composition?	_____	_____	_____
i. persons with educational experience?	_____	_____	_____
j. persons with financial management experience?	_____	_____	_____
k. requiring a minimum attendance record?	_____	_____	_____

Summary: In relation to this criterion I feel that the board's overall performance has been:

Very Good_____ Good_____ Barely Adequate_____ Poor_____

Don't Know or Cannot Judge_____

Further comments or suggestions related to this criterion:

Criterion 6

Board Organization

The effectiveness of a board depends greatly on the structure of its organization and the conduct of its meetings. A productive board is usually one that has periodically taken the time to thoughtfully sort out its duties, critically review its organizational structure and rules of procedure, and update its bylaws, policy or operations documents. Committee structure depends upon the board's size, the frequency of meetings, and the workload that can be placed on individual members. Periodic critical review should also determine, among other things, if a few persons in fact are making most of the board's decisions, if responsible minority opinions have the opportunity for full board consideration, and if communication between the campus community and the public is open.

	Yes	No	Don't Know or Can't Judge
1. Within the past two or three years, has the board in some formal way reviewed its organization, committee practices, and bylaws?	_____	_____	_____
2. Do meeting agendas:			
a. put before you issues of *policy* for the board's consideration?	_____	_____	_____
b. include appropriate supporting information in the right amount?	_____	_____	_____
c. reach you sufficiently in advance of the meeting?	_____	_____	_____
3. Do you believe that the number and duration of board meetings are sufficient to properly take care of the institution's business?	_____	_____	_____
4. Are board meetings effectively conducted and reasonably stimulating?	_____	_____	_____
5. Do you feel that the present committee structure:			
a. handles the board's work efficiently?	_____	_____	_____
b. gives the *full board* the opportunity to consider adequately all matters of key importance?	_____	_____	_____
c. allows constituencies to be heard before recommendations are formed?	_____	_____	_____
6. Do board policies vis-a-vis board and committee membership afford sufficient opportunity for rotating leadership?	_____	_____	_____

Summary: In relation to this criterion I feel that the board's overall performance has been:

Very Good_____ Good_____ Barely Adequate_____ Poor_____

Don't Know or Cannot Judge_____

Further comments or suggestions related to this criterion:

Criterion 7

Board/Chief Executive Relations

Trustees and the chief executive officer share at least one major characteristic: they have a total institutional perspective. The quality of the "working relationship" between the board and the executive officer is of critical importance to the effectiveness of each. While the board must take responsibility for basic policies and their consequences, it must also give the chief executive the authority and flexibility to act decisively.

Selection of the chief executive officer is a major responsibility of the governing board, and should be preceded by a clear definition of his or her qualifications and expected accomplishments.

	Yes	No	Don't Know or Can't Judge
1. Is there a climate of mutual trust and support between the board and chief executive?	_____	_____	_____
2. Have the board or some of its members counseled with the chief executive to provide guidelines or strengthen certain areas of performance?	_____	_____	_____
3. Do you feel that the board has delegated to the chief executive the authority he or she needs to administer the institution successfully?	_____	_____	_____
4. Is there a written statement of role and responsibility for the chief executive which defines clearly his or her functions and the board's expectations?	_____	_____	_____
5. Is there a clear understanding of the respective responsibilities between the chief executive and the board concerning their fund-raising roles?	_____	_____	_____
6. Does the board or a board committee formally assess the chief executive's performance in some systematic way from time to time?	_____	_____	_____

Summary: In relation to this criterion I feel that the board's overall performance has been:

Very Good_____ Good_____ Barely Adequate_____ Poor_____

Don't Know or Cannot Judge_____

Further comments or suggestions related to this criterion:

Criterion 8

Board/Faculty Relations

In academic affairs a measure of the board's success is the nature of its relationship with the faculty. Most lay board members lack the professional expertise to legislate in this area, yet they share the burden of responsibility for the quality of the institution and for the manner in which the institution fulfills its academic goals. Therefore, the board must trust the professionals for advice, and delegate to them authority to carry out educational policies and procedures.

The line between governing policy and operating policy is not easily drawn, but it must nevertheless be established with reasonable clarity. The institution needs to be given academic direction, yet the faculty must be free to perform its professional work.

	Yes	No	Don't Know or Can't Judge
1. Does the board have effective means of two-way communication with the faculty?	_____	_____	_____
2. Does the board, through the chief executive, seek the advice and recommendations of faculty leaders in formulating basic educational policies?	_____	_____	_____
3. Do you feel that the board exercises authority over:			
a. _____ more aspects of educational affairs than it needs to?			
b. _____ fewer aspects of educational affairs than it should?			
c. _____ neither. Its participation in educational affairs is about right.			
4. Does the board delegate to the chief executive and faculty full responsibility for implementing educational policies?	_____	_____	_____
5. Has the board adopted adequate policies concerning:			
a. grievance procedures?	_____	_____	_____
b. process for selection, promotion, retention, tenure?	_____	_____	_____

Summary: In relation to this criterion I feel that the board's overall performance has been:

Very Good_____ Good_____ Barely Adequate_____ Poor_____

Don't Know or Cannot Judge_____

Further comments or suggestions related to this criterion:

Criterion 9

Board/Student Relations

The board has ultimate responsibility to protect the welfare of students and to provide a healthy campus environment that is conducive to scholarship and personal development. The students' health and comfort are essential to learning. The students' freedom to learn independently is a basic tenet of academic freedom, and like other freedoms it must be exercised under the obligation to protect the welfare of the community as a whole. The board should also assure itself of good communication with students.

	Yes	No	Don't Know or Can't Judge
1. Does the board have a satisfactory means for continuing two-way communication with students?	_____	_____	_____
2. Has the board approved policies that make adequate provision for the students' health, welfare, and non-curricular (cultural, educational, recreational) activities?	_____	_____	_____
3. Has the board set adequate policies for student appeal of perceived injustices (academic or other)?	_____	_____	_____
4. Are students and student organizations free to examine and discuss questions or issues of interest to them and to express opinions publicly, so long as it is made clear that they speak only for themselves?	_____	_____	_____

Summary: In relation to this criterion I feel that the board's overall performance has been:

Very Good_____ Good_____ Barely Adequate_____ Poor_____

Don't Know or Cannot Judge_____

Further comments or suggestions related to this criterion:

Criterion 10

Court of Appeal

Governing boards may from time to time be called upon to fulfill a quasi-judicial function in the settlement of disputes arising within the institutional community. As a general rule, however, disputes should be settled at the lowest possible administrative level to avoid inappropriate board involvement in operational matters. The board should develop carefully due process policies and delegate authority.

	Yes	No	Don't Know or Can't Judge
1. Has the board developed procedural due process or "fair hearing" requirements which delegate the management of conflict situations to the chief executive and to academic administrators or faculty leaders?	_____	_____	_____
2. Are the disputes that have been brought to the board:			
a. summarized accurately and concisely for your study?	_____	_____	_____
b. done so before they have escalated to crisis proportions?	_____	_____	_____
c. settled without unduly prolonged debate?	_____	_____	_____
3. Do you feel that disputes have been settled with sympathetic understanding of the human and institutional issues involved?	_____	_____	_____
4. Do you feel that the board has been called upon to adjudicate cases of conflict that should have been settled before they came to the board?	_____	_____	_____

Summary: In relation to this criterion I feel that the board's overall performance has been:

Very Good_____ Good_____ Barely Adequate_____ Poor_____

Don't Know or Cannot Judge_____

Further comments or suggestions related to this criterion:

General Assessment

1. What issues have most occupied the board's time and attention during the past year?

2. What were the one or two successes during the past year for which the board feels some satisfaction?

3. What particular shortcomings do you see in the board's organization or performance that need attention?

4. Other comments or suggestions?

Trustee Audit

The responsibilities of individual trustees are different from those of boards as corporate entities. The following checklist is designed to help board members assess the extent to which they have absorbed the breadth and depth of their roles and institutions. The questions seem somewhat imposing, but they are not intended to cause acute trustee or presidential depression. A "perfect score" is an unreasonable expectation.

Candid responses can be helpful to the design of orientation programs for new board members, or future workshops and retreats. The checklist can also be adapted to the unique characteristics of your particular institution as a supplement to the preceding board self-study criteria. It was developed by Richard T. Ingram, executive vice president of AGB, as part of the *Handbook of College and University Trusteeship*, published by Jossey-Bass. The questions are the result of the scrutiny of a number of chief executives and trustees.

Background	Yes	No	Somewhat or Sometimes
1. Do you feel you have adequate opportunity to understand your obligations, responsibilities and opportunities for growth *as a trustee*?	_____	_____	_____
2. Have you a clear grasp of *your board's* responsibilities?	_____	_____	_____

3. If you have answered yes to either or both questions, what has been the primary source(s) of your information? (e.g., an orientation program, a particular individual, a book, prior service as a board member.)

_____

_____

_____

4. Are you familiar with your institution's stated mission, institutional plan and current policies?	_____	_____	_____
5. Do you stay abreast of higher education trends, legislation and other public policy by reading *AGB Notes, The Chronicle of Higher Education, AGB Reports,* or other material?	_____	_____	_____
6. Have you taken an opportunity recently to meet with trustees and educators from other institutions?	_____	_____	
7. Do you have adequate opportunities to know your fellow trustees?	_____	_____	_____
8. Do you find any conflict between your responsibility for the welfare and advancement of your institution and your responsibility to the citizens of your region, state or nation?	_____	_____	_____

9. Please indicate with an "x" your strongest areas of *expertise* based on your background and personal experience.

_____ Budget/Finance
_____ Investments
_____ Management
_____ Planning
_____ Legal Affairs
_____ Plant Management
_____ Real Estate
_____ Education
_____ Student Affairs
_____ Faculty Affairs
_____ Fund Raising
_____ Public Relations
_____ Marketing
_____ Government Relations
_____ Other: _____

10. Now go back and check (✓) any primary areas of *interest* outside of your background and expertise.

Knowledge of the Institution	Yes	No	Somewhat or Sometimes
11. Are you familiar with your institution's recent history and what makes it distinctive from neighboring colleges and universities?	_____	_____	_____
12. Cite three of its special strengths: a) _____ b) _____ c) _____			
13. And its three greatest needs: a) _____ b) _____ c) _____			
14. Do you feel well informed about the type and quality of your institution's educational programs?	_____	_____	_____
15. Have you attended a campus event within the past year?	_____	_____	
16. Do you read the campus newspaper or faculty or student organization minutes?	_____	_____	_____
17. Do you know the names of your institution's:			
a) Key administrators?	_____	_____	
b) Faculty leaders?	_____	_____	
c) Student leaders?	_____	_____	
18. Have you met some of them apart from board meetings?	_____	_____	
19. Are you acquainted with the physical plant and maintenance needs of your institution?	_____	_____	_____
Board and Committee Meetings			
20. Are you satisfied with your attendance at board and committee meetings?	_____	_____	_____
21. Do you read the minutes of meetings to determine whether they faithfully represent the proceedings and decisions as you recall them?	_____	_____	_____
22. Do you prepare for board meetings by reading agendas and supporting materials?	_____	_____	_____
23. Do you suggest agenda items?	_____	_____	_____
24. Do you help board and committee meetings to steer clear of non-policy matters better left to the administration?	_____	_____	_____
Fund Raising and Public Relations			
25. Do you contribute a gift to your institution according to your means for:			
a) Annual operations?	_____	_____	_____
b) Capital campaigns?	_____	_____	_____

	Yes	No	Somewhat or Sometimes
26. Within the past year or two, have you helped secure a gift from an individual, corporation or other source?	_____	_____	
27. Have you recently taken advantage of an opportunity to say a good word about your institution to a policymaker or organization at the state level?	_____	_____	
28. Do you take advantage of opportunities to inform other groups or persons about your institution, or about higher education generally?	_____	_____	_____

Trustee Concerns

29. Do you understand the concept of "fund-accounting"?	_____	_____	_____
30. Do you find your institution's financial statements intelligible?	_____	_____	_____
31. Are you mindful of your institution's stated mission, institutional plan and goals, and current policies when voting on proposals presented to the board?	_____	_____	_____
32. Do you feel you are sensitive to the concerns of students and faculty while maintaining impartiality and a total institutional perspective?	_____	_____	_____
33. Do you help meet the needs of your chief executive for occasional counsel and support in his or her often difficult relationships with groups on- and off-campus?	_____	_____	_____
34. Do you appreciate the importance of keeping your chief executive informed in the event you establish personal communication lines with individuals on campus, and of the need to avoid prejudiced judgments on the basis of such relationships?	_____	_____	_____
35. Have you ever suggested to the board's nominating committee or to the appointing authority someone who would make an outstanding new board member?	_____	_____	
36. Are you satisfied that there are no real or apparent conflicts of interest in your service as a trustee?	_____	_____	_____
37. Do you avoid asking special favors of the administration, including requests for information, without the knowledge of at least the president or board chairman?	_____	_____	_____
38. If you have not already done so, would you be willing to serve as a committee chairman or board officer?	_____	_____	

Why (or why not)?_____

_____

_____

39. Have you found your trusteeship to be stimulating and rewarding thus far?	_____	_____	

Why (or why not)?_____

_____

_____

40. How would you rate yourself as a trustee at this time?

Above Average_____ Average_____ Below Average_____